

The Bible in Foreign Missions



American Bible Society
Bible House, Astor Place
New York



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IN the year 1912 the American Bible Society issued 4,049,610 Bibles, Testaments, Psalters, separate Gospels, and other portions of Scripture. Out of this total 2,224,099 volumes were put into circulation in foreign lands. Lands which are known as pagan received 1,717,935 of these books, the remainder for the most part going into territories where the prevailing form of Christianity deprives the poor of the written Word or where Islam denies the redeeming power of Christ and man's need of it.

The Society's Agencies Abroad

For greater efficiency and precision the Society has organized twelve Agencies in foreign lands mentioned below, with the date of establishment of each and the number of issues in 1912 and the total issues.

	Founded	Issues in 1912.	Issues from beginning
Levant (Turkey, Syria, and Egypt).....	1836	167,688	3,309,848
La Plata (South American republics, except Brazil and Venezuela).....	1864	64,699	1,226,222
Brazil	1876	70,594	958,368
Japan.....	1876	133,055	2,637,162
China.....	1876	1,367,404	15,919,326
Mexico.....	1878	19,431	810,560
Korea.....	1882	88,214	545,972
West Indies.....	1882	72,409	522,514
Venezuela.....	1888	6,463	70,381
Slam.....	1890	98,556	860,832
Central America.....	1892	31,472	297,125
Philippine Islands.....	1899	53,742	1,066,537
Total.....		2,167,727	28,224,847

Bible Distribution Beyond the Fields of the Agencies

In some foreign lands outside of the Agency fields Christian workers are supplied with Scriptures by the Society directly. Thus, in some countries of Europe, in Arabia, in Persia, in Africa, east and west and south, and in the Micronesian Islands and the territory of Hawaii, such aid is rendered. The number of volumes circulated in such lands in 1912, so far as reported, was 55,827.

The Languages

The Bibles used in the foreign fields are in about one hundred languages. Of these seventeen are Chinese dialects and styles. A missionary in China, much impressed by the effort of the Society to reach the masses with the Scriptures, wrote a few years ago to the American Bible Society: "Your Society has been more endeared to me for the help it has rendered in publishing the Scriptures in the Colloquial, and placing the Bible within the reach of our church members, Sunday schools, and Bible classes."

Printing Bibles Abroad

In 1912, out of the total issues of the Society, 1,941,751 books were issued by the foreign Agencies, being printed by contract on mission and other presses in Constantinople, Beirut, Bangkok, Shanghai, Chentu, Weihsien, Foochow, Hinghwa, Yokohama, and Seoul. The contract printing for the Bible Society forms an important part in the support of several mission presses.

The Distribution of Scriptures Abroad

Bibles, except they reach the people who need them, remain unfruitful. An essential part of the work of the Bible Society is the maintenance of colporteurs to go into highways and hedges and persuade men. Fortunately, the Bible Societies have special fitness for such a work. They go as representatives of Christendom, with no denominational badge, bearing the royal banner of the cross. They go lightly equipped, like the shepherd boy with his sling and a few stones gathered from the bed of the brook. Moreover, they who carry these books for the service of the Lord are a great host. In 1912 the American Bible Society reported the employment of 810 persons, men and women, as Bible distributors in other lands. And these are believers, able to give a reason for the hope that is in them, and to tell of their own experience of saving grace. They supplement the story of the preacher, they co-operate with every one who loves the name of the Lord. They go bearing heavy burdens; enduring hardship; suffering persecution and abuse; they are arrested and haled before magistrates and cast into prisons; they live on the simplest food, and they are literally worn out in the Master's service.

The Missionary and the Bible Colporteur

These men do real missionary work whose value is acknowledged by all missionaries. One missionary in China says: "The Bible

work is not only a valuable adjunct to evangelistic effort in China and elsewhere, but without it all our work would be sounding brass and tinkling cymbal." A missionary in Persia writes: "The Book goes farther than the missionary. After the tour of the missionary the Scriptures sold remain, bearing their silent testimony to his teaching. Every now and then we run across a New Testament in some unexpected quarter, and find that it is being read." One in Turkey speaks from another point of view in saying, "We regard our Bible colporteurs, whom you sustain, as pioneers in evangelistic work here—as the successors of John the Baptist in this wilderness of races and of faiths which jostle one another in our wide fields."

They who engage in Bible distribution in lands where Christ is not known are true missionaries, laboring to expel selfishness and its train of sins, and to implant in the hearts of the people a passion for what is pure and right.

The Bible in Missions

Dr. Alexander McLaren once said: "The work of the Bible Society is the necessary supplement of all our missionary work. 'What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder'; but if we set before us the alternative — which, thank God, we have not — a missionary without a Bible, or a Bible without a missionary, I say, 'Give me the Bible, and we will do without the missionary.'"

As to the place held by the Holy Scriptures with the missionary himself, it is unique,

supreme. They furnish him with his commission, his great and sole reason for being a missionary. The Bible is the missionary's life, his message, his armor, his two-edged sword. Its truth is in him a quenchless spring. He has found the fountain of living waters and he knows it. He is tempted in as many directions as there are varying phases of life around appealing for speedy and human remedying; but he knows that it is the Bible that has 'made him to differ,' and that the remedy it proposes and the life its truths impart are the only things he has for man.

A missionary in Turkey emphasizes the place of the Bible in the daily life of the newly won followers of Christ. He says: "The Bible enters so much into every part of our work that it is impossible to give a report of the work of the Bible Society apart from our other work. In the church or in the family, in the schools, the orphanages, the hospital, or in the villages, the Bible is the one book that is read by all."

The late Dr. Pease of Micronesia, speaking of the people of the Gilbert Islands, stated that from the Bible they learn morality even without a teacher. To discard intoxicants and tobacco and to observe the Lord's day, are duties which they easily find out for themselves and rigidly practice. Lying and licentiousness, their former habits, become at once causes for excommunication from the church.

The Rev. Dr. House, of the American Board's Balkan Mission, describes a case that is but one of many thousands in foreign mis-

sion fields. He says: "Near Samokov in Bulgaria there is a little town which years ago seemed to be in almost hopeless darkness. The first ray of light, as far as we know, came from a New Testament purchased by a poor lame shoemaker who says of himself that he was a very bad man before that purchase. The reading of that Testament seems to have altogether transformed his life, to the wonder of all. From that small seed of the Word a plenteous harvest is now being reaped in that town."

Among people of different races and in regions separated by the diameter of the earth the Bible has transforming power. The vital need of every missionary is to have at hand the book in the language of the people among whom he is stationed.

Bible Translation by Missionaries

In Asia the many tongued, the translation of the Scriptures represented the first gun in the conflict for the overthrow of paganism, superstition, and unbelief. Long before China opened even five ports to western civilization, far-seeing missionaries outside the walls were struggling with its difficult language and getting a version of the Bible ready for the day when the people should begin to wake up, and were receiving aid from the American Bible Society in this work. In India and Burma missionaries as early as 1820, working in the Tamil, Telugu, Marathi, Burmese and various other versions, asked and received aid from the American Bible Society. When Turkey, Persia, and Syria were little more to Amer-

icans than names from ancient history, American missionaries were supplementing the archaic, antiquated Armenian version by translating the Scriptures into the speech of the people; were adding to the ancient Peshitto version used by Nestorians, one in the modern Syriac which common folk could understand; were bringing into being a new and more intelligible Turkish version, and an Arabic version which has become standard. Of the latter version a veteran missionary wrote to the American Bible Society, "The blades of Damascus were ever as famous as those of Toledo, but the fame of your Scriptures, the 'sword of the Spirit,' in Arabic, printed at Beirut, has surpassed them both; for they are to be found in almost every country where the Arabic is spoken or known as the repository of the Koran."

Giving Letters to Pagan Languages

Missionaries have not only enriched languages by giving them the Bible, but have given destitute languages letters. Of such was Mr. Ousley, born a slave in one of our Southern states, a devoted and efficient missionary of the American Board in Portuguese East Africa. He gave the Tonga tribes letters and then some of the Gospels, and his work was made available to all people using that tongue by the American Bible Society, which printed it. Dr. Hiram Bingham was another of the missionaries whose privilege it has been to endow a people with letters. The Gilbert Islands in Micronesia had no alphabet. Dr. Bingham gave them an alphabet and then

the whole Bible. His work too was given to the multitude by the American Bible Society, which has printed nine editions of the Gilbertese Bible.

The Bible Society and the Missionary

Missionary work is commonly regarded as including the pulpit, the school, and the hospital. The literary part of the missionary's labor and the source of the Bibles circulated are rarely mentioned, perhaps because these make no noise. Literary work flourishes in the quiet library of scholarly writers. If the literary worker translates the Bible he is mentioned with approval and respect, but his translation work, often aided with money from the Bible Society, would remain on his library table were it not for that Society. Or if printed at great expense by his mission, it would remain a purely local and very costly work.

The Bible Society is the publicity department for Bible versions in the foreign missionary field. It takes from the translator's table the one precious copy of a new version and transforms this fruitage of missionary life into printed books which will teach truth and wisdom to tens and hundreds of thousands. Dr. Elias Riggs, sixty years ago, translated the Bible into modern Armenian. The American Bible Society alone has printed and circulated 489,782 copies of that version. Moreover, the Bible Society gives wings to a version made for one denomination that it may reach missions of every denomination wher-

ever the language of that version is used. Eli Smith and Cornelius Van Dyck, with aid from the American Bible Society, translated the Bible into Arabic for missions in Syria and Egypt; but that splendid version of the Bible printed by the American Bible Society goes to missions wherever Mohammedans are found: in Asia, Africa, North and South America, and the islands of the great oceans. The work of the Bible Society that makes the Bible versions effective is one of the links which bind together foreign missionaries and the American Bible Society. Not long ago a missionary in China wrote to the American Bible Society: "Dr. Hykes modestly refers to the work of the American Bible Society as a valuable 'adjunct' to evangelistic effort in China. From my standpoint as a missionary I would not speak of it as an 'adjunct,' but as lying at the very foundation of all of our evangelistic work."

The Appeal of an Unlimited Range of Work

The Bible Society offers a wider range of Christian efficiency than any missionary board. It transcends denominational lines and extends an offer and an opportunity for reaching out to places and people otherwise inaccessible. Your denomination may perhaps have no mission in Korea, in South America, in Turkey, in Bulgaria. There is no convenient way by which you can do anything to promote the kingdom of our God in those regions through any agency in which your denomination is represented other than the Bible Soci-

ety. So while your organized missionary societies are well engaged elsewhere, in the Bible Society is a way by which you may take satisfaction in doing something for these parts of the world.

It also stands to reason that in work which is common to the Bible Society and the missionary societies, supporters of the missionary societies in their good work in foreign missions should bear their full part of the expense involved in carrying out the necessary undertaking of increasing knowledge of the Holy Scriptures among the Gentiles.

What Are You To Do about this Appeal?

The history of the American Bible Society is a history of the wonderful blessing of God upon this effort to carry the Holy Scriptures to all nations. It is also a vision of the undimmed glory springing from the effectiveness of the Bible to turn the hearts of men. "Dan" Crawford, in "Thinking Black," tells this story of a young man converted by the mere reading of St. John's Gospel. This he had got in the mission school, but he went on his way in sin, reckoning without God and the Word of God, still clinging, however, to his copy of John's Gospel. One day out of the pages of "John of the Bosom" came the call "Follow me!" "The gun cotton of that Gospel came in contact with the tinder of his rebellion, and this young man was literally exploded into the Kingdom." He could only explain his conversion in these quaint, choice words: "I was startled to find that Christ

could speak Chiluba. I heard him speak out of the printed page, and what he said was 'Follow me'." Then this ignorant African entered the new era of reading the old book. Now God is staring at him from every page and showing him his duty simply and satisfactorily, his soul settled for eternity on the living Word of God.

You Should Share in this Work

The dissemination of the Bible in pagan lands is God's own remedy for degeneration among those races who know Him not. The missionaries of the American Board in Madras were convinced of this in 1839 when they sent an irresistible appeal to the American Bible Society thus worded, "We feel constrained to ask you to fill the censers in our hands with fire and incense, that we may run quickly among the people and stay the plague which is abroad among them."

That cry comes to the American Bible Society more and more persistently from the different countries in the foreign field. In 1912 orders for 300,000 volumes of Scripture had to be refused by the Bible Society Agent in China because he had not the money to print them. Let not such a terrible accident occur again. It is a time for individuals, for Sunday schools, for churches to realize that they can have a share in the great work here briefly described. The widow of a Presbyterian missionary in Mexico has just written to a Secretary of the Bible Society: "Recently it has been my pleasure to make my three sons, all born in old Mexico, Life Members of the

grand Society of Bible work. The lads are fifteen, eighteen, and twenty-three years of age, but I wish them all to be associated with the Bible work all of the years of their life, and it may be that will help to control their interest and service for God."

Will not you contribute \$30 to the American Bible Society and so become a Life Member, entitled to receive all its reports, as well as its monthly literature? Will not you contribute to the Society on the annuity plan; making a gift to the Society, that is to say, conditioned on receiving a stated sum annually during your lifetime? And you who would fain continue to labor for the Kingdom after leaving this life—will not you help this work by bequeathing to the American Bible Society a sum for Bible distribution? In one of these ways, or in some other way, Christians should unflinchingly carry on this Bible work, which after all is God's, for its initiative came from God and not from man.

May all who read this story pray for the faith and the clear vision which shall make members in the Church of Christ naturally and simply fellow-laborers with God in the great work which he is carrying on throughout the world.

Foreign Agencies of the American Bible Society

In the Order of their Establishment

Levant Agency.

REV. MARCELLUS BOWEN, D.D., Bible House, Constantinople.

La Plata Agency:

REV. FRANCIS G. PENZOTTI, Casilla de Correo 304, Lavalle 1467, Buenos Ayres, Argentina.

Japan Agency:

REV. H. W. SCHWARTZ, M.D., Yokohama.

China Agency:

REV. JOHN R. HYKES, D.D., 14 Kiuklang Road, Shanghai.

Brazil Agency:

REV. H. C. TUCKER, Caixa 454, Rio de Janeiro.

Mexico Agency:

MRS. F. S. HAMILTON, Box 1373, Mexico City.

Korea Agency:

REV. S. A. BECK, Seoul.

West Indies Agency:

REV. W. F. JORDAN, 1761 Brooklyn Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y.

Siam and Laos Agency:

REV. ROBERT IRWIN, Bangkok, Siam.

Central America and Panama Agency:

REV. JAMES HAYTER, Guatemala City, Guatemala.

Philippines Agency:

REV. J. L. McLAUGHLIN, Manila.

Venezuela Agency:

REV. GERARD A. BAILLY, Caracas, Venezuela.

